

CHAPTER 22

Here are three separate messages which God entrusts the prophet to deliver concerning Judah and Jerusalem, and all to the same purport, to show them their sins and the judgments that were coming upon them for those sins.

I. Here is a catalogue of their sins, by which they had exposed themselves to shame and for which God would bring them to ruin (v. 1-16).

II. They are here compared to dross, and are condemned as dross to the fire (v. 17-22).

III. All orders and degrees of men among them are here found guilty of the neglect of the duty of their place and of having contributed to the national guilt, which therefore, since none appeared as intercessors, they must all expect to share in the punishment of (v. 23-31).

~~2216~~ EZEKIEL 22:1-16

THE SINS OF JERUSALEM

In these verses the prophet by a commission from Heaven sits as a judge upon the bench, and Jerusalem is made to hold up her hand as a prisoner at the bar; and, if prophets were set over other nations, much more over God's nation, ²⁴¹⁰Jeremiah 1:10. This prophet is authorized to *judge the bloody city*, the *city of bloods*. Jerusalem is so called, not only because she had been guilty of the particular sin of blood-shed, but because her crimes in general were bloody crimes (²⁴⁰²³Ezekiel 7:23), such as polluted her in her blood, and for which she deserved to have blood given her to drink. Now the business of a judge with a malefactor is to convict him of his crimes, and then to pass sentence upon him for them. These two things Ezekiel is to do here.

I. He is to find Jerusalem guilty of many heinous crimes here enumerated in a long bill of indictment, and it is *billa vera* — *a true bill*; so he writes upon it whose judgment we are sure is according to truth. He must *show*

her all her abominations (v. 2), that God may be justified in all the desolations brought upon her. Let us take a view of all the particular sins which Jerusalem here stands charged with; and they are all exceedingly sinful.

1. Murder: *The city sheds blood*, not only in the suburbs, where the strangers dwell, but *in the midst of it*, where, one would think, the magistrates would, if any where, be vigilant. Even there people were murdered either in duels or by secret assassinations and poisonings, or in the courts of justice under colour of law, and there was no care taken to discover and punish the murderers according to the law (^{<1096>}Genesis 9:6), no, nor so much as the ceremony used to expiate an uncertain murder (^{<621>}Deuteronomy 21:1), and so the guilt and pollution remains upon the city. Thus *thou hast become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed*, v. 4. This crime is insisted most upon, for it was Jerusalem's measure-filling sin more than any; it is said to be that *which the Lord would not pardon*, ^{<1246>}2 Kings 24:4.

(1.) The *princes of Israel*, who should have been the protectors of injured innocence, *every one were to their power to shed blood*, v. 6. They thirsted for it, and delighted in it, and whoever came within their power were sure to feel it; whoever lay at their mercy were sure to find none.

(2.) There were those who *carried tales to shed blood*, v. 9. They told lies of men to the princes, to whom they knew it would be pleasing, to incense them against them; or they betrayed what passed in private conversation, to make mischief among neighbours, and set them together by the ears, to bite, and devour, and worry one another, even to death. Note, Those who, by giving invidious characters and telling ill-natured stories of their neighbours, sow discord among brethren, will be accountable for all the mischief that follows upon it; as he that kindles a fire will be accountable for all the hurt it does.

(3.) There were those who *took gifts to shed blood* (v. 12), who would be hired with money to swear a man out of his life, or, if they were upon a jury, would be bribed to find an innocent man guilty. When so much barbarous bloody work of this kind was done in Jerusalem we may well conclude,

[1.] That men's consciences had become wretchedly profligate and seared and their hearts hardened; for those would stick at no wickedness who would not stick at this.

[2.] That abundance of quiet, harmless, good people were made away with, whereby, as the guilt of the city was increased, so the number of those that should have stood in the gap to turn away the wrath of God was diminished.

2. Idolatry: *She makes idols against herself to destroy herself*, v. 3. And again (v. 4), *Thou hast defiled thyself in thy idols which thou hast made*. Note, Those who make idols for themselves will be found to have made them against themselves, for idolaters put a cheat upon themselves and prepare destruction for themselves; besides that thereby they pollute themselves, they render themselves odious in the eyes of the just and jealous God, and even *their mind and conscience are defiled*, so that to them *nothing is pure*. Those who did not make idols themselves were yet found guilty of *eating upon the mountains*, or high places (v. 9), in honour of the idols and in communion with idolaters.

3. Disobedience to parents (v. 7): *In thee have the children set light by their father and mother*, mocked them, cursed them, and despised to obey them, which was a sign of a more than ordinary corruption of nature as well as manners, and a disposition to all manner of disorder, ^{<2175>} Isaiah 3:5. Those that set light by their parents are in the highway to all wickedness. God had made many wholesome laws for the support of the paternal authority, but no care was taken to put them in execution; nay, the Pharisees in their day taught children, under pretence of respect to the Corban, to set light by their parents and refuse to maintain them, ^{<155>} Matthew 15:5.

4. Oppression and extortion. To enrich themselves they wronged the poor (v. 7): *They dealt by oppression and deceit with the stranger*, taking advantage of his necessities, and his ignorance of the laws and customs of the country. In Jerusalem, that should have been a sanctuary to the oppressed, *they vexed the fatherless and widows* by unreasonable demands and inquisitions, or troublesome law-suits, in which might prevails against right. "*Thou hast taken usury and increase* (v. 12); not only there are those in thee that do it, but thou hast done it." It was an act of the city or community; the public money, which should have been employed in public charity, was put out to usury, with extortion. *Thou hast greedily*

gained of thy neighbours by violence and wrong. For neighbours to gain by one another in a way of fair trading is well, but those who are *greedy of gain* will not be held within the rules of equity.

5. Profanation of the sabbath and other holy things. This commonly goes along with the other sins for which they here stand indicted (v. 8): *Thou hast despised my holy things*, holy oracles, holy ordinances. The rites which God appointed were thought too plain, too ordinary; they despised them, and therefore were fond of the customs of the heathen. Note, Immorality and dishonesty are commonly attended with a contempt of religion and the worship of God. *Thou hast profaned my sabbaths*. There was not in Jerusalem that face of sabbath-sanctification that one would have expected in the *holy city*. Sabbath-breaking is an iniquity that is an inlet to all iniquity. Many have owned it to contribute as much to their ruin as any thing.

6. Uncleaness and all manner of seventh-commandment sins, fruits of those vile affections to which God in a way of righteous judgment gives men up, to punish them for their idolatry and profanation of holy things. Jerusalem had been famous for its purity, but now *in the midst of thee they commit lewdness* (v. 9); lewdness goes bare-faced, though in the most scandalous instances, as that of a man's having his father's wife, which is the *discovery of the father's nakedness* (v. 10) and is a sin *not to be named among Christians* without the utmost detestation (~~401~~1 Corinthians 5:1), and was made a capital crime by the law of Moses, (~~401~~Leviticus 20:11. The time *to refrain from embracing* has not been observed (~~406~~Ecclesiastes 3:6), for *they have humbled her that was set apart for her pollution*. They made nothing of committing lewdness with a *neighbour's wife*, with a *daughter-in-law*, or a sister, v. 11. And *shall not God visit for these things?*

7. Unmindfulness of God was at the bottom of all this wickedness (v. 12): *“Thou hast forgotten me, else thou wouldst not have done thus.”* Note, Sinners do that which provokes God because they forget him; they forget their descent from him, dependence on him, and obligations to him; they forget how valuable his favour is, which they make themselves unfit for, and how formidable his wrath, which they make themselves obnoxious to. Those that *pervert their ways forget the Lord their God*, (~~401~~Jeremiah 3:21.

II. He is to pass sentence upon Jerusalem for these crimes.

1. Let her know that she has filled up the measure of her iniquity, and that her sins are such as forbid delays and call for speedy vengeance. She has made *her time to come* (v. 3), *her days to draw near*; and she *has come to her years* of maturity for punishment (v. 4), as an heir that has *come to age* and is ready for his inheritance. God would have borne longer with them, but they had arrived at such a pitch of impudence in sin that God could not in honour give them a further day. Note, Abused patience will at last be weary of forbearing. And, when sinners (as Solomon speaks) grow *overmuch wicked*, they *die before their time* (~~2017~~ Ecclesiastes 7:17) and shorten their reprieves.

2. Let her know that she has exposed herself, and therefore God has justly exposed her, to the contempt and scorn of all her neighbours (v. 4): *I have made thee a reproach to the heathen*, both *those who are near*, who are eye-witnesses of Jerusalem's apostasy and degeneracy, and *those afar off*, who, though at a distance, will think it worth taking notice of (v. 5); they shall all *mock thee*. While they were reproached by their neighbours for their adherence to God it was their honour, and they might be sure that God would roll away their reproach. But, now that they are laughed at for their revolt from God, they must lie down in their shame, and must say, *The Lord is righteous*. They make a mock at Jerusalem, both because her sins had been very *scandalous* (she is *infamous*, *polluted in name*, and has quite lost her credit), and because her punishment is very *grievous* — she is *much vexed* and frets without measure at her troubles. Note, Those who fret most at their troubles have commonly those about them who will be so much the more apt to make a jest of them.

3. Let her know that God is displeased, highly displeased, at her wickedness, and does and will witness against it (v. 13): *I have smitten my hand at thy dishonest gain*. God, both by his prophets and by his providence, revealed his wrath from heaven against their *ungodliness* and *unrighteousness*, the oppressions they were guilty of, though they got by them, and *their murders* (the *blood which has been in the midst of thee*), and all their other sins. Note, God has sufficiently discovered how angry he is at the wicked courses of his people; and, that they may not say that they have not had fair warning, he *smites his hand* against the sin before he *lays his hand* upon the sinner. And this is a good reason why we should despise dishonest gain, even the *gain of oppressions*, and *shake our hands from holding bribes*, because these are sins against which God *shakes his hands*, ~~2015~~ Isaiah 33:15.

4. Let her know that, proud and secure as she is, she is no match for God's judgments, v. 14.

(1.) She is assured that the destruction she has deserved will come: *I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it.* He that is true to his promises will be true to his threatenings too, for he is not a man that he should repent.

(2.) It is supposed that she thinks herself able to contend with God, and so stand a siege against his judgments. She bade defiance to the day of the Lord, ^{215B}Isaiah 5:19. But,

(3.) She is convinced of her utter inability to make her part good with him: *“Can thy heart endure, or can thy hand be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? Thou thinkest thou hast to do only with men like thyself, but shalt be made to know that thou fallest into the hands of a living God.”* Observe here,

[1.] There is a day coming when God will *deal with sinners*, a day of visitation. He deals with some to bring them to repentance, and there is no resisting the force of convictions when he sets them on; he deals with others to bring them to ruin. He deals with sinners in this life, when he brings upon them his sore judgments; but the days of eternity are especially the days in which God will deal with them, when the full vials of God's wrath will be poured out without mixture.

[2.] The wrath of God against sinners, when he comes to deal with them, will be found both intolerable and irresistible. There is no heart stout enough to endure it; it is none of the infirmities which *the spirit of a man will sustain*. Damned sinners can neither forget nor despise their torments, nor have they any thing wherewith to support themselves under their torments. There are no hands strong enough either to ward off the strokes of God's wrath or to break the chains with which sinners are bound over to the day of wrath. *Who knows the power of God's anger?*

5. Let her know that, since she has walked in the way of the heathen, and learned their works, she shall have enough of them (v. 15): *“I will not only send thee among the heathen, out of thy own land, but I will scatter thee among them and disperse thee in the countries, to be abused and insulted over by strangers.”* And since her *filthiness* and *filthy ones* continued in her, notwithstanding all the methods God had taken to *refine* her (she *would not be made clean*, ^{241D}Jeremiah 13:27), he will be his judgments

consume her filthiness out of her; he will destroy those that are incurably bad and reform those that are inclined to be good.

6. Let her know that God has disowned her and cast her off. He had been her heritage and portion; but now (v. 16), *“Thou shalt take thy inheritance in thyself, shift for thyself, make the best hand thou canst for thyself, for God will no longer undertake for thee.”* Note, Those that give up themselves to be ruled by their lusts will justly be given up to be portioned by them. Those that resolve to be their own masters, let them expect no other comfort and happiness than what their own hands can furnish them with, and a miserable portion it will prove. *Verily, I say unto you, They have their reward. Thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things.* These are the same with this, *“Thou shalt take thy inheritance in thyself, and then, when it is too late, shalt own in the sight of the heathen that I am the Lord, who alone am a portion sufficient for my people.”* Note, Those that have lost their interest in God will know how to value it.

~~327~~ EZEKIEL 22:17-22

THE SINS OF JERUSALEM

The same melancholy string is still harped upon, and various turns are given it, to make it affecting, that it may be influencing. The prophet must here show, or at least it is here shown him, that the whole house of Israel has become as dross and that as dross they shall be consumed. What David has said concerning the wicked ones of the world is here said concerning the wicked ones of the church, now that it is corrupt and degenerate (~~319~~ Psalm 119:119): *Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross.*

I. See here how the wretched degeneracy of the house of Israel is described. That state, in David's and Solomon's time, had been *a head of gold*; when the kingdoms were divided it was as the *arms of silver*. But now,

1. It has degenerated into baser metal, of no value in comparison with what it formerly was: *They are all brass, and tin, and iron, and lead*, which some make to signify divers sorts of sinners among them. Their being brass denotes the impudence of some in their wickedness; they are

brazen-faced, and cannot blush; their *shoes* had been *iron and brass* (⁴⁸³⁵Deuteronomy 33:25), but now their brow is so, ²⁸⁸⁴Isaiah 48:4. Their being tin denotes the hypocritical profession of piety with which many of them cover their iniquity; they have a specious show, but no intrinsic worth. Their being iron denotes the cruel disposition of some, and their delight in war, according to the character of the *iron age*. Their being lead denotes their dulness, sottishness, and stupidity: though soft and pliable to evil, yet heavy and not movable to good. *How has the gold become dross! How has the most fine gold changed!* So is Jerusalem's degeneracy bewailed, ²⁹⁰¹Lamentations 4:1. Yet this is not the worst; these metals, though of less value, are yet of good use. But,

2. *The house of Israel has become dross to me.* So she is in God's account, whatever she is in her own and her neighbours' account. They were silver, but now they are *even the dross of silver*; the word signifies all the dirt, and rubbish, and worthless stuff, that are separated from the silver in the washing, melting, and refining of it. Note, Sinners, and especially degenerate professors, are in God's account as dross, vile, and contemptible, and of no account, as the *evil figs* which *could not be eaten, they were so evil*. They are useless and fit for nothing; of no consistency with themselves and no service to man.

II. How the woeful destruction of this degenerate house of Israel is foretold. They are all gathered together in Jerusalem; thither people fled from all parts of the country as to a city of refuge, not only because it was a strong city, but because it was the holy city. Now God tells them that their flocking into Jerusalem, which they intended for their security, should be as the gathering of various sorts of metal into the furnace or crucible, to be melted down, and to have the dross separated from them. They are *in the midst of Jerusalem*, surrounded by the forces of the enemy; and, being thus enclosed,

1. *The fire of God's wrath* shall be kindled upon this furnace, and it shall be *blown*, to make it burn fiercely and strongly, v. 20, 21. God will *gather them in his anger and fury*. The blowing of the fire makes a great noise, so will the judgments of God upon Jerusalem. When God stirs up himself to execute judgments upon a provoking people, from the consideration of his own glory and the necessity of making some examples, then he may be said to *blow the fire of his wrath* against sin and sinners, to *heat the furnace seven times hotter*.

2. The several sorts of metal gathered in it shall be melted; by a complication of judgments, as by a raging fire, their constitution shall be dissolved, they shall lose all their former shape and strength, and shall be utterly unable to stand before the wrath of God. The various sorts of sinners shall be melted down together, and united in a common overthrow, as *brass* and *lead* in the same furnace, as trees are *bound in bundles for the fire*. They came together into Jerusalem as a place of defence, but God brought them together there as unto a place of execution.

3. God will leave them in the furnace (v. 20): I will *gather you into the furnace* and will *leave you there*. When God brings his own people into the furnace he sits by them, as the refiner by his gold, to see that they be not continued there any longer than is fitting and needful; but he will bring these people into the furnace, as men throw dross into it, which they design shall be consumed, and therefore are in no care about it, but *leave it there*. Compare with this ^{<3854>}Hosea 5:14, *I will tear and go away*.

4. Hereby the dross shall be wholly separated and the good metal purified, the impenitent shall be destroyed and the penitent reformed and fitted for deliverance. *Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer*, ^{<1704>}Proverbs 25:4. This judgment shall do that in the house of Israel for the doing of which other methods had been tried in vain, and *reprobate silver shall they no more be called*, ^{<2450>}Jeremiah 6:30.

^{<3523>}EZEKIEL 22:23-31

CHARGE AGAINST PROPHETS AND PRIESTS

Here is,

I. A general idea given of the land of Israel, how well it deserved the judgments coming to destroy it and how much it needed these judgments to refine it. Let the prophet tell her plainly, “*Thou art the land that is not cleansed*, not refined as metal is, and therefore needest to be again put into the furnace. Means and methods of reformation have been ineffectual; thou art *not rained upon in the day of indignation*.” This was one of the judgments which God brought upon them in the day of his wrath, he *withheld the rain* from them, ^{<2440>}Jeremiah 14:4. Or, “When thou art under

the tokens of God's displeasure, even in the day of indignation thou art *not rained upon*; thou hast not received instruction by the prophets, whose doctrine is said to *descend as the rain*." Or, "When thou art corrected thou art not cleansed; thy filth is not carried away as that in the streets is by a sweeping rain. Nay, though it be a *day of indignation* with thee, yet thy filthiness, which should be done away, has become more *offensive*, as that of a city is in dry weather, when it is not rained upon." Or, "Thou hast nothing to refresh and comfort thyself with *in the day of indignation*; thou art not rained upon by divine consolations." So the rich man in torment had not a *drop of water*, or rain, to *cool his tongue*.

II. A particular charge drawn up against the several orders and degrees of men among them, which shows that they had all helped to fill the measure of the nation's guilt, but none had done any thing towards the emptying of it; they are therefore all alike.

1. They have every one *corrupted his way*, and those who should have been the brightest examples of virtue were ringleaders in iniquity and patterns of vice.

(1.) The *prophets*, who pretended to make known the mind of God to them, were not only *deceivers*, but *devourers* (v. 25), and hardened them in their wickedness both by their preaching, wherein they promised them impunity and prosperity, and by their conversation, in which they were as profligate as any. *There is a conspiracy of her prophets* against God and religion, against the true prophets and all good men; they conspired together to be all in one song, as Ahab's prophets were, to assure them of peace in their sinful ways. Note, The unity which is found among pretenders to infallibility, and which they so much boast of, is only the result of a secret *conspiracy* against the truth. Satan is not *divided against himself*. The prophets are *in conspiracy* with the murderers and oppressors, to patronise and protect them in their wickedness, and justify what they did with their false prophecies, provided they may come in sharers with them in the profits of it. They are like *a roaring lion ravening the prey*; they thunder out threats against those whose ruin is aimed at, terrify them, or make them odious to the people, and so make themselves masters,

[1.] Of their lives: They *have devoured souls*, have been accessory to the shedding of the blood of many an innocent person, and so have made

many to become sorrowful widows who were comfortable wives. They have persecuted those to death who witnessed against their pretensions to prophecy and would not be imposed upon by their counterfeit commission. Or, They devoured souls by flattering sinners into a false peace and a vain hope, and seducing them into the paths of sin, which would be their eternal ruin. Note, Those who draw men to wickedness, and encourage them in it, are the devourers and murderers of their souls.

[2.] Of their estates. When Naboth is slain they take possession of his vineyard; *They have seized the treasure and precious things*, as forfeited; some way or other they had of *devouring the widows' houses*, as the Pharisees, ^{<424>}Matthew 23:14. Or, They got this *treasure*, and all these *precious things*, as fees for false and flattering prophecies; for *he that puts not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him*, ^{<305>}Micah 3:5. It was said with Jerusalem when such men as these passed for prophets.

(2.) The priests, who were teachers by office, and had the custody of the sacred things, and should have called the false prophets to account, were as bad as they, v. 26.

[1.] They violated the law of God, which they should have observed and taught others to observe. They made no conscience of the law of the priesthood, but openly broke it, and with contempt, as Hophni and Phinehas. They did what they had a mind, with an express *non obstante* — *notwithstanding* to the word of God. And how should those teach the people their duty who lived in contradiction to their own?

[2.] They *profaned God's holy things*, about which they were to minister, and which they ought to have restrained others from the profanation of. They suffered those to eat of the holy things who were unqualified by the law. The table of the Lord was contemptible with them. By dealing in holy things with such unhallowed hands they did themselves profane them.

[3.] They did not themselves put a difference, nor did they show the people how to *put a difference, between the holy and profane, the clean and the unclean*, according to the directions and distinctions of the law. They did not exclude those from God's courts who were excluded by the law, nor teach the people to observe the difference the law had made between food clean and unclean, between times and places holy and common; but they lived at large themselves and encouraged the people to do so too.

[4.] They *hid their eyes from God's sabbaths*; they took no care about them; it was all one to them whether God's sabbaths were kept holy or no; they neither gave countenance to those who observed them nor check to those who profaned them, nor did they themselves show any regard to them or veneration for them. They winked at those who did servile works on that day, and looked another way when they should have inspected the behaviour of the people on sabbath days. God's sabbaths have such a beauty and glory put upon them by the divine institution as may command respect; but they *hid their eyes* from them and would not see that excellency in them.

[5.] By all this God himself was *profaned among them*; his authority was slighted, his goodness made light of, and the highest affront and contempt imaginable were put upon his holiness. Note, The profanation of the honour of the scriptures, of sabbaths and sacred things, is a profanation of the honour of God himself, who is interested in them.

(3.) The princes, who should have interposed with their authority to redress these grievances, were as daring transgressors of the law as any (v. 27): *They are like wolves ravening the prey*; for such is power without justice and goodness to direct it. All their business was to gratify,

[1.] Their own pride and ambition, by making themselves arbitrary and formidable.

[2.] Their own malice and revenge, by *shedding blood and destroying souls*, sacrificing to their cruelty all those that stood in their way or had in any thing disobliged them.

[3.] Their own avarice; all they aim at is to *get dishonest gain*, by crushing and oppressing their subject. *Lucri bonus est odor ex re qualibet. Rem, rem, quocunque modo rem* — *Sweet is the odour of gain, from whatever substance it ascends. Money, money, by fairness or by fraud, get money.* But, though they had power sufficient to carry them on in their oppressive courses, yet how could they answer it both to their credit and to their consciences? We are told how (v. 28): The prophets *daubed them with untempered mortar*, told them in God's name (horrid wickedness!) that there was no harm in what they did, that they might dispose of the lives and estates of their subjects as they pleased, and could do no wrong, nay, that in prosecuting such and such whom they had marked out they did God service; and thus they stopped the mouth of their consciences. They also

justified what they did, to the people, nay, and *magnified* it as if it were all for the public good, and so saved their reputation, and kept their oppressed subjects from murmuring. Note, Daubing prophets are the great supporters of ravening princes, but will prove at last their great deceivers, for they daub with untempered mortar which will not hold, nor will the wall stand long that is built up with it. They pretend to be seers, but they *see vanity*; they pretend to be diviners, but they *divine lies*; they pretend a warrant from Heaven for what they say, and that it is all as true as gospel; they say, *Thus saith the Lord God*, but it is all a sham, for *the Lord has not spoken any such thing*.

(4.) The people that had any power in their hands learned of their princes to abuse it, v. 29. Those that should have complained of the oppression of the subject, and have put in a *claim of rights* on behalf of the injured, that should have stood up for liberty and property, were themselves invaders of them: *The people of the land have used oppression and exercised robbery*. The rich oppress the poor, masters their servants, landlords their tenants, and even parents their own children; nay, the buyers and sellers will find some way to oppress one another. This is such a sin as, when it is national, is indeed a national judgment, and is threatened as such. ^{<306>}Isaiah 3:5, *The people shall be oppressed every one by his neighbour*. It is an aggravation of the sin that they have *vexed the poor and needy*, whom they should have relieved, and have *oppressed the stranger* and deprived him of *his right*, to whom they ought to have been not only just, but kind. Thus was the apostasy universal and the disease epidemical.

2. There is none that appears as an intercessor for them (v. 30): *I sought for a man among them that should stand in the gap, but I found none*.

Note,

(1.) Sin makes a gap in the hedge of protection that is about a people at which good things run out from them and evil things pour in upon them, a gap by which God enters to destroy them.

(2.) There is a way of standing in the gap, and making up the breach against the judgments of God, by repentance, and prayer, and reformation. Moses stood in the gap when he made intercession for Israel to *turn away the wrath of God*, ^{<1463>}Psalms 106:23.

(3.) When God is coming forth against a sinful people to destroy them he expects some to intercede for them, and enquires if there be but one that

does; so much is it his desire and delight to show mercy. If there be but a man that stands in the gap, as Abraham for Sodom, he will discover him and be well pleased with him.

(4.) It bodes ill to a people when judgments are breaking in upon them, and the spirit of prayer is restrained, so that *not one is found* that will either give them a good word or speak a good word for them.

(5.) When it is so, what can be expected but utter ruin? *Therefore have I poured out my indignation upon them* (v. 31), have given it full scope, that it may come upon them in a full stream; yet, whatever God's wrath inflicts upon a people, it is *their own way* that is therein *recompensed upon their heads*, and God deals with them no worse, but even much better, than their iniquity deserves.